



City of Seattle
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

News Release

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One-stop center for homeless adults opens

Connections will offer hope and a path away from homelessness

SEATTLE — A one-of-a-kind, one-stop housing and services referral center for homeless adults called “Connections” opened downtown today and will start serving the public on Monday.

“As promised in my State of the City address, Connections will play a pivotal role in our efforts to end homelessness in our community,” said Mayor Greg Nickels. “For the first time, individuals will be able to access from one location the broad network of housing and human services that they need to end their own homelessness.”

Construction of Connections — located at The Morrison, 505 Third Avenue, and operated by the Downtown Emergency Service Center — was paid for with \$2 million in City of Seattle general funds. The annual operating cost of \$1 million also will be paid for by the city.

All homeless adults who walk through the doors of Connections will meet with a case manager who will help them develop custom-tailored action plans that identify goals and the specific steps, services and referrals needed to reach those goals.

“Connections is intended to improve the lives of homeless people and improve the nearby neighborhood,” said Seattle City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, who led the funding and approval for the project through the council. “This is much more than a safe and warm place to go during the day. Case managers will be on hand to provide individual planning and referrals to critical services including housing, health care, job training and job placement. Individuals with debilitating addictions or mental illness will be guided to treatment programs that will help them stabilize their lives and get off the streets and into permanent housing.”

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“This isn’t a typical drop-in or hygiene center — it is a place focused on getting results,” said Bill Hobson, Downtown Emergency Center executive director. “Individuals who aren’t serious about meeting with a case manager and finding a place to live or a job will not be eligible for continued services. Connections will allow us to serve a group of individuals who are currently slipping through the cracks of our service system. It will allow us to give people what they really need to end their homelessness. We are grateful for our partnership with the city in reaching out to this significant group of people.”

Connections is just one of the City of Seattle's investments in the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. In 2005, 332 new units of city-funded housing opened up, representing a investment of about \$12 million. The city ear-marked another \$10 million in Housing Levy funds in 2005 to create future housing for the homeless.

In 2006, the city will spend nearly \$7 million on shelter, enhanced shelter and enhanced transitional housing programs. Enhanced means housing where supportive services also are offered, so that residents have what they need to reach their goals and live independently.

“Integrating housing with human services is what the Ten-Year Plan is all about, and that’s why Connections is such a great concept being launched at such an important time,” said Bill Block, director of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County, the group that wrote and is responsible for coordinating implementation of the Ten-Year Plan.

The committee’s partners — businesses, governments, nonprofit organizations, philanthropies and the faith community — are working closely together to build thousands of units of housing, integrate human services, generate new funding sources and prevent homelessness countywide. The committee is expected to release a report on its progress next month.

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